

Background Information on Arsenic

Arsenic is one of the inorganic contaminants regulated under the Phase II/V Rules. In 2001, under the Arsenic Rule, EPA adopted a lower standard for arsenic in drinking water. The lower standard of 10 parts per billion (ppb) replaced the prior standard of 50 ppb.

Arsenic is a semi-metal element in the periodic table. It is odorless and tasteless. It can enter drinking water supplies from natural deposits in the earth or from agricultural and industrial practices.

Non-cancer effects of arsenic can include:

- Thickening and discoloration of the skin,
- Stomach pain,
- Nausea,
- Vomiting,
- Diarrhea,
- Numbness in hands and feet,
- Partial paralysis, and
- Blindness.

Arsenic has been linked to a number of cancers. These include cancer of the bladder, lungs, skin, kidney, nasal passages, liver, and prostate.

EPA set the arsenic standard for drinking water at 10 ppb (or 0.010 parts per million). This protects consumers from the effects of long-term, chronic exposure to arsenic. PWSs had to comply with the lower standard by January 23, 2006.

Excerpted from: <https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/chemical-contaminant-rules>